Chapter 6

Teaching Collaboration Skills to Foster Social-Emotional Learning

ABSTRACT

Human collaboration is a valued skill in the workforce and something that people and students perform now and in the past. However, collaboration is more complex than what most teachers think. Many teachers simply have students work together and call it collaboration. However, researchers find it hard to define collaboration and the culture that can influence this soft skill. With more knowledge, a teacher who plans and organizes students into collaborative activities will find their efforts worthwhile and more effective. Teachers can use collaboration as a process, product, or both in tandem. Other teachers may find collaboration overwhelming without the use of some structured activities and formats. Children's books can be an excellent way to initiate collaboration. Formative feedback process keeps collaboration on track and is an excellent way to evaluate the effectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much. – Helen Keller.

Working together is a very humanistic trait. The quote above from Helen Keller confirms that people accomplish more together than working alone. The

Partnership for 21st Learning Framework (2019) and the National Research Council (NRC, 2012) also assert that collaboration is essential for social-emotional learning. Kahn (2015) described collaboration as an essential skill for students to solve a problem, think critically, and have effective learning. Therefore, teachers need to know more about collaboration and how to implement collaboration strategies and skills in their classrooms.

Recently in education, collaboration is used in teaching and learning as the means to support effective teaching as well as the method to enhance learning. Educators and researchers started to investigate the concept and practice of collaboration. Lately, these researchers have studied a plethora of areas and topics. The following range of topics will be discussed in this chapter:

1.   Historical background of collaboration
2.   What is collaboration?
3.   How to create a collaborative culture
4.   What are the types of collaboration?

Beside trying to answer these questions, resources that teachers can use, such as books, activities, and strategies will be presented as well.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF COLLABORATION

Collaboration has been and is currently a teaching strategy used off and on since schooling in ancient civilization. Ancient societies such as Greece, China, and India used what would now be described as learning groups to foster learning through personal interactions and conversations. The rise of wise men like Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad illustrates close-knit learning groups or communities. However, the close communities disappeared over time with the advent of migration, industrialization, and formal schooling.

Independence in schooling or education became a crucial component in the late 1800s and early into the 1900s. The opposite of collaboration became the dominant teaching method where the teacher was the dominant force in the classroom, so cooperation and collaboration were replaced individually. Then three theorists reintroduced the idea of collaboration into teaching and learning. The three theories were Dewey (1938), Piaget (1967), and Vygotsky 1962). First, Dewey's philosophy of teaching and learning explored the social nature of learning through discussion and hands-on problem-solving. Then Piaget shifted the thinking from the social and emotional aspects of teaching

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